

Hunting Lodge



HUNTING LODGE
281 Glendale Drive

Designated Miami Springs Historic Site (1994)

The Hunting Lodge is considered the first structure built by Glenn Curtiss in the western Everglades area later named Country Club Estates. Originally built for his own use in the early 1920's with special logs from Kentucky and Tennessee, it was featured in a 1924 Curtiss-Bright promotional brochure for Hialeah as the "Hialeah Shooting Park." Curtiss was an outdoorsman, camper, marksman and archery enthusiast, and this rustic building, pre-dating and dramatically different from the Pueblo style that was later adopted for the development of Country Club Estates, provided him with a location not too far from home to enjoy these pursuits. The winding road leading to it is still known as Hunting Lodge Drive. It soon turned out to be the center of many social activities in the new community before the golf clubhouse and Hotel Country Club were erected.

Towards the end of the 1920's it became apparent that an elementary school was needed for the rapidly growing town, and the log cabin was converted into the "Country Club Estates School," the smallest school in Dade County at the time. The students sat at tables by grade level on little chairs with storage compartments under the hinged seats, where they kept their school supplies. Split pine benches lined three sides of the room, and in cold weather the "big boys" of the third grade were tasked with keeping a fire going in the large coral rock fireplace. Since the school was formerly a gun club, a deer head still hung on one wall and during recess the children loved searching the grounds for remains of the clay pigeons that had been used by skeet shooters. Two outhouses were located in the yard, one for boys and one for girls. When students needed to use these facilities, they were accompanied by an older child with a hoe or a stick to be used as a weapon against snakes, who sought higher and drier ground there in the rainy season. The nearby canal (now known as the Melrose Canal) was home to frogs, turtles and alligators, whose noises could clearly be heard during the classes. One teacher was responsible for teaching every grade, and she also functioned as the principal, playground supervisor, music and art teacher. In 1933 the school closed and the students were transferred to Hialeah Elementary School (now South Hialeah Elementary) until Miami Springs Elementary School (a W.P.A. project) opened in 1937.

Subsequently the building was modified for commercial uses, including a perfume factory and an airplane factory, before becoming a private residence. A large original porch was enclosed, modern conveniences and appliances were installed, and much of the mortared-log exterior was enclosed in exterior plywood sheathing, clapboards and stucco.

However, the Hunting Lodge is still recognizable by the interlocking ends of the original logs that are visible on the north side of the structure and near the original front door, with its distinctive wrought iron hinges. The interior of this home retains the rustic charm of the Hunting Lodge, with its Dade County pine floors, large fireplace and cathedral ceiling with log rafters.

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